

Dear Governor Haley:

First let me start off by thanking you in advance for reading my letter. I know that you are very busy and taking time out of your day to consider my comments means so much to me.

My name is Crystal Scott. I am a criminal domestic abuse survivor. In a million years, I would never have thought I would be one of **"those" women**. Today, it's important for me to stand up and say that I am not a victim of the violence I endured for 8 years, as much as the lack of diligence and support from the judicial system. The concern I want to bring before you is the many other women, like myself, who are dealing with this same issue day in and day out. The injustice to victims of criminal domestic violence, that happens every day. The injustice and lack of protection we receive when we do reach out for help. I know that I am not the only woman who has experienced over and over how the criminal gets a slap on the hand for violating innocent women like me. Let me explain a little about my story.

In 2001, I met Phillip Moore. Everything was pretty good until the 1st time Phillip laid his hands on me. On July 27, 2004 we got into a fight. I don't remember what it was all about but Phillip was intoxicated and pushed me away from the phone because I wanted to call my parents. I instead called the police. He was arrested that night. The next day he was out with only a small fine and required to complete a CDV Program. Of course, I took him back figuring no big deal. And there were no more instances until June 5, 2007. Again there was another fight. He threw me to the floor. I got up and started running for the door when Phillip took a chair and threw it at my head while I was exiting the front door. I again called the police. For his 2nd charge of criminal domestic abuse he got the following:

- ☐ 1 year suspended to 30 days and 1 year probation. Credit 2 days.
- ☐ Serve his remaining time on the weekends. Also complete a CDV Program.

Again I took him back, which I knew I shouldn't, but I thought "he didn't hurt me too bad and I can fix him." Worst mistake I could make. The next one almost cost me my life.

Let's fast forward to December 8th, 2009. The beginning of my nightmare. I got a call from my best friend that her dad had passed away. Phillip was employed with her father, so when he heard about his passing, it sent him into a horrible drinking binge. For three days it was his mouth; calling me every name in the book but no physical abuse. I went to the memorial service on December 11, 2009 without him because I was not taking someone who would cause a scene. When I came home from the visitation, there was a butcher knife stuck in the coffee table and spit all over the television. Phillip was passed out on the couch. I left him there. The next morning as soon as I got up, the verbal abuse started again. I decided to leave for a couple of hours but came back to the nightmare I almost didn't survive.

When Phillip realized I had returned, the verbal abuse was back on. And yes, I started arguing back. I was tired of his stuff and was not going to continue with it. He went into the kitchen and returned with a butcher knife. He began swinging it around; saying "Are you ready to die tonight?" I told him I was not scared of him and said to put the knife down. He put the knife down and stalked out the door. Sometime later he returned to the house. He sat down in the desk chair. Picked up the camera and said "Smile B****, because this is the last picture that your daughter will ever see of you alive." Again, I told him I was not scared of him. He laughed at me and then went into the kitchen to make a sandwich. He returned to the desk chair and started counting down his bites saying "Four more bites until I kill you."

Three more bites. Two more bites. One more bite and you're going to die B*****." I again told him I was not scared of him. He laughed at me again and left the house. About 30 minutes later he returned with a 5 gallon can of gas. He poured the gas over his head, then started flicking the lighter. He was ready to blow us up! I started talking to him to get him to stop. He stopped flipping the lighter and went into the bedroom. I walked into the bathroom to get some towels to clean up the gas. I asked him what he was doing, and his response was "I am going to kill you B*****." He grabbed me by my neck and hair. He pushed my face into the bed and was choking me while suffocating me at the same time. I passed out and only by the grace of God did I get some fight back in me. Finally I got away from him! As I started running for the door, I was grabbed again by the neck. I wrestled away from him. While exiting the door he threw some unknown object at me and hit me in the shoulder. Frantically, I called the police. When the police arrived, he started screaming, "It was her. Arrest her for hitting me and pouring gas over my head." When the police tried to talk to him, he started fighting with them. The fight ended up with them breaking his arm. When the police were talking to me, Phillip started kicking the windows and seats of the police car. He was charged with Criminal Domestic Violence 3rd offense and not attempted murder. This was his intent.

February 2, 2010 was the trial date. Instead of the maximum for 3rd offense Criminal Domestic, his charges were dropped to Criminal Domestic 2nd offense. His sentence was:

- ☐ 1 year suspended to 49 days and 1 year probation. 49 days successfully served
- ☐ Complete another CVD program
- ☐ I could have died! That is it for trying to taking my life?

He stayed away from me until June. Then one day I had arranged for my neighbor to cut my grass while I was at work. I came home that day, and saw that he had not cut the grass. So I went over to his house to ask for the money back since he never cut it. He proceeded to tell me that Phillip showed up to the house. Threatening him for being on his property and telling him he better get off of it. I called the police, but was told there was nothing they could do because there was not a restraining order in place. Later that night Phillip began calling and harassing me. I told him to stop calling me. He started the threats again about killing me. I called the police again. An officer arrived and while talking to me Phillip called again. The officer heard Phillip threaten me again. The officer took the phone from me and told Phillip to stop calling me. He told Phillip that if he called me again, he would be arrested. The calls stopped. The next morning I called Phillips probation officer. The probation officer told me that I would need to bring in my phone and any other proof that Phillip was at the house and he would deal with it. Once again, Phillip got away with just a slap on the wrist. I then filed for a restraining order and it was granted for one year. One week after it was granted, Phillip was escorted by the police to my house to get his stuff. About a week later, I received a call that Phillip had broken his probation. I would be notified when he was caught.

Let's fast forward five years to the end of September 2015. I received a letter that Phillip was caught and there was a trial date of October 5th, 2015. When I called to see where to go for the court date, I was told that since he was released on bond, it would be at the court house. I was in total shock. You released someone out on bond that had been running for 5 ½ years. You have got to be kidding me. I showed up for court only to be told that it was cancelled and rescheduled for the next day. I showed up for court again the next day. I was made aware that court was cancelled the whole week because of the flooding and told I would receive another letter of the next scheduled court date. The next letter came

for a new court date of November 4, 2015. For the third time, I showed up to the courthouse. The probation officer came up to me and said "Why are you here? They didn't call you?" At this point I was fuming. I had taken time off from my new job again, and again there would be no closer to this nightmare. Russell sent me to talk to Pat in the probation office. She told me that when he showed up for his court date of October 13th, he was having medical issues and an ambulance was called so it was rescheduled for the November 4th. I had not been notified of the October 13th court date! Can you see a pattern of the victim not being notified? The reason, they told me, was because he was hit by a car and was having several surgeries. She said he would be crippled. I relieved that he would not be able to hurt me again! Maybe I could rest a little easier and not have fear looking my shoulder day and night. Pat told me that it would be rescheduled again and I would get another letter. That letter arrived. The new court date was December 9th. I would finally be able to have closure from this never ending nightmare I was living! Unfortunately, I did not get that closure because he did not show up for court. I also found out it was not verified that he even was hit by a car. He was to bring all the proof to the court hearing. Nobody called to verify that the information he told, was the truth? Phillip is again on the run. Another warrant is issued for his arrest.

The victims have no protection or justice. Perfect example, while sitting in court waiting to see if Philip would show, I was listening to the other cases being tried. One was a drug dealer for his 2nd time. The sentence he received was 2 years. Another case was a 2nd offense for Criminal Domestic Violence. His sentence was 90 days. You have got to be kidding me, I thought. You hurt someone and you get 90 days. But then you give someone drugs who has a choice of taking them or not and you get 2 years? What is wrong with this picture?

South Carolina must stop being on the top of the list for Criminal Domestic Violence. We never will until we have tougher laws. We need to have more protection for the victims. Women and men will continue to stay in these situations when there is no real punishment. I can tell you first hand, I would rather see it coming at me than coming up from behind. It will at least give me a fighting chance. Please! Let's stop the violence!

I know this is lengthy and once again I thank you for your time to read my story in all its ugly horror. I hope it gives you some insight from the victim's point of view. I desperately want things to change for the victims of domestic violence. So many of us live our lives looking over our shoulders, never any peace for us. With your help we can begin to make progress.

Sincerely,

Crystal Scott